

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2011

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerald Carr
Sandra Edwards
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker
Anglyn Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron
Larry Dickerson
Jim Hill

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Teresa Doan

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

James Gatewood
AER Vacant

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Tony Brown, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Mary Douglas, Rhonda Garmon, Ernest Hart, Ginny McWilliams, Mona Mason, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Judith Renick, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Coral Virden, Donna Walker, Cassandra Williams

CALL TO ORDER. *Chairman Mr. Gerald Carr called the meeting to order.*

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. *Motion was made by Mr. Dickie Walker to approve the agenda. Mr. Gary Hall seconded the motion. **Motion passed.***

APPROVAL OF 06/10/11 MINUTES. Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the minutes. Mr. Walker seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Federal Budget – The Budget Control Act super committee met for the first time recently and is moving to reduce the deficit in three phases. Continuation of VR funding at the current level is unlikely. The structure of VR service delivery may change, but in phase one, services to consumers do not appear to be in jeopardy.

Reauthorization of the Transportation Act – Senator Boozman's staff contacted DSB to discuss the issue of commercialization of highway rest stops in relation to the Vending Program. Reauthorization of the Transportation Act continues to be deferred. Several states are looking at commercialization of rest stops as a source of additional income. This could have a negative impact on the Arkansas vending machine locations and potential jobs for consumers because of increased competition.

Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act – A revised provision in the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act has triggered protest from consumer groups, because its wording makes it appear that Congress seeks to expand existing mechanisms allowing payment of sub-minimum wages to people with disabilities. Thanks to organized opposition by consumer groups, particularly NFB, this proposal is stalled indefinitely.

RSA Review – Many of the DSB board members participated as stakeholders in the federal monitoring review last summer. DSB has received the draft report, which (compared to other states) appears very positive. The division received several commendations and a few recommendations. Like most other states, DSB will be in a corrective action posture to ensure that any Program Income, such as Social Security Reimbursement is expended before Voc Rehab dollars are drawn. RSA is still finalizing instructions to the states on acceptable methodology for spending program income. DSB is proposing to deposit the unpredictable reimbursements into the Independent Living Rehabilitation Services (ILRS) program to serve consumers who are blind or severely visually impaired and have other disabling conditions. This will better serve the small program and be simpler to track the funding. This proposal is acceptable to RSA at this time.

A Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) development meeting is scheduled with RSA officials in the coming weeks. DSB requested RSA Technical Assistance under the monitoring review response to focus on growing the number of qualified Supportive Employment providers in Arkansas. Training for this network has been limited, both in Arkansas and regionally, and RSA is committed to assisting with its development.

Among other recommendations noted in the Review, RSA charges DSB to take steps to improve the division's ability to recruit, develop and retain qualified staff. This corrective action should strengthen the position of DSB in petitioning state OPM for related actions such as expediting freeze exemption approval and restoring DSB capacity for tuition stipend. DSB is working with the RSA sponsored Technical Assistance Continuing Education (TACE) program on this and other parts of the corrective action plan. The monitoring review report is available on the RSA website at <http://rsa.ed.gov> and interested parties are encouraged to read it.

Expansion of Certification Sources. Currently, state job specifications for Rehab Teachers and related professionals require AER certification, which is administered by the Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). DSB consumers have petitioned the division to expand acceptable certifying bodies in Orientation and Mobility, to promote future job opportunities for them with DSB either on staff or via purchase of services. The division will take action through OPM to expand the job specification to include other certifying entities, and DSB policy will be amended to accept other certifications as long as the academic standards and examination are equivalent to those required under ACVREP.

STATE ISSUES:

Outreach and Coordination – DSB consumer success has received quite a bit of coverage in recent news releases and on the local version of national public radio. Counselors and consumers have also been recognized for partnering with the Department of Workforce Services to take advantage of the computer kiosks. This initiative even drew the attention of the RSA Commissioner, Lynnae Rutledge. The feature about the kiosk partnership was a very positive piece and showed the relationship DSB has with Workforce Services. DHS provided stimulus money for the 17 kiosks, and the latest report indicated that 417 people have utilized the kiosks so far. The training of DWS staff was done by DSB Business and Technology (B & T) staff.

B & T Administrator Mr. Jim Pearson stated that his staff has just completed installing the last of the 17 kiosks in August, and the units are activated and working. The DWS staff are trained to coach an individual on how to get into the computer system, but consumers need to be familiar with JAWS or Zoom Text before arrival at the kiosks. Consumers can contact their VR Counselor for this specialized training.

Board member Dick Walker asked whether DWS has any disabled employees. The DSB Director said she could contact DWS Director Artee Williams to see if DWS has a listing of persons who have voluntarily declared themselves as having a disability. Tracking such data is one of the topics of the Governor's Task Force under Executive Order 10-17 on increasing the number of persons with disabilities employed in state government and in

the state as a whole. The recommendations of the Task Force will go forward to the Governor by October 31.

As the AER representative, Ms. Angyln Young reported that she contacted the Arkansas Chapter about the proposed expansion of certifications in Orientation and Mobility, and the state AER unanimously passed a motion supporting standards for the hiring of O&M instructors. The DSB Director will include that verbiage when petitioning OPM regarding the minimum qualifications of staff positions providing O & M. There is also a case to be made in restoring a separate O&M classification on the books. O&M is a needed service, and the existence of a separate classification affects current staff, future recruits, and DSB contractors.

Jump Start – The 2011 Jump Start was a great success. Between the partnership with the School for the Blind, ESVI, and DSB, it was a wonderful experience for the students, as well as the staff, and some of the students are already looking forward to coming back next year. Hopefully the Jump Start experience will lead consumers to successful careers in the years to come.

Youth Leadership – A few of the DSB consumers who were in Jump Start were later involved in the Youth Leadership Forum, which is a short residential program sponsored by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services focused more along the lines of Girls State and Boys State.

Disaster Preparedness – One of the partnerships that DSB values highly is with the UAMS Crime Victims with Disabilities program. In addition to crime awareness and prevention, the organization is taking a big role in disaster preparedness for persons with disabling conditions. Crime Victims with Disabilities is receptive to the fact that information needs to be accessible and that preparedness for a person who is blind takes a different tack than say, a person who uses a wheelchair. UAMS is just now getting some expanded training on preparedness, so DSB will participate in training with them. All over the state, the DSB Area Supervisors are working at the local level to help our constituents be better prepared for disasters, so consumers can be responsible for themselves initially.

The Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM), which is housed at Camp Robinson, has been training DHS Divisions, including DSB, by putting staff through a series of immersion exercises called ‘injects’ to see how they react to certain situations. Trainers intend to do the same type of mock preparations for several layers in our staff, so they will get familiar with the statewide disaster plan and how to respond to various disasters as a group.

Special Events – At the state level, DSB is working on Blindness Awareness Month and on Disability Awareness Month at the Capitol. DSB is partnering again with other agencies

to observe White Cane Safety Day. DSB is waiting on word whether Governor Mike Beebe or Little Rock City Mayor Mark Stodola will participate in the observance.

Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) – Recently, DSB has seen growing support from legislators promoting the OIB program. Representative Leslee Post of Ozark, is an active advocate for persons who are blind and visually impaired in Arkansas, and is particularly interested in the changes in OIB. She is concerned that many parts of Arkansas know nothing about DSB, and she wants to change that. The consumer support group in Ozark is very active and aware of the decline in funding for the Older Blind program. OIB funds that had been elevated for a time via additional grants, have now returned to the original level of several years ago (approximately \$315,000). That level is not enough to staff a viable direct service program across the state. Representative Post was so concerned that this funding crisis be made known to her fellow legislators, that she traveled to Little Rock recently specifically to bring this issue to the attention of the Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) subcommittee, and ask legislators to do what they can to try to increase OIB funding.

Increasing the Role of Support Groups. As we move forward to the 2012 session, the reality of what is happening in D.C. and the subsequent repercussions to the state of Arkansas should concern everyone. Consumer support groups play a key role in sharing information on resources available locally. Rather than decreasing involvement with these important groups due to OIB funding issues, DSB is moving to increase its interaction with support groups and facilitate their role as networks for distributing Voc Rehab information and providing local mentoring services. The strongest support groups in the state are far more focused on serving other persons who are blind and severely visually impaired, rather than serving themselves.

Impact of Automated Cost Allocation on OIB The DHS automated cost allocation system implemented last year made it clear that more OIB services were being provided by DSB staff than funding allowed. This required DSB to realign service delivery to match available funding, severely curtailing direct services. Charges for supervisory and administrative services related strictly to OIB also increased costs and decreased available direct-service funding. To conserve costs, DSB is administering the OIB Stimulus program through World Services for the Blind until September 30th and will continue to serve older individuals who are blind through a regular OIB funded contract through June 30, 2012. Between October 1 and the beginning of the new contract, cases will be triaged, so that the most critical are served first with the funds that are available. Later on the agenda, Dr. Dickerson is going to make a presentation on how World Services has been serving DSB consumers under the stimulus grant.

DIVISION ISSUES

DSB is beginning preparation for the 2012 state legislative session:

- Maintenance of Effort (MOE) – DSB cannot predict what will happen at the national level with the Budget Control Act. Our state fiscal goal is to be able to continue the current level of our Maintenance of Effort (MOE) matching funds. State law charges the DSB Board with maximizing available funding. To do that, DSB has to meet the federally required MOE to qualify for current and incentive Voc Rehab funding. Last year we met the MOE, and qualified for an incentive award of \$1.8M in VR funds with no additional match required. This year DSB has received notification that it has qualified for an additional \$1.7M incentive award. The downside to this is that if total state matching funds remain level (as has been the case), they must, by law, automatically be siphoned away from OIB to maximize the incentive funding of VR. However, if VR funds can be expended to rehabilitate consumers who are SSI/SSDI recipients, DSB can qualify for reimbursement of those costs from the Social Security Administration. This ‘program income’ can then be diverted specifically to support Older Blind.
- Legislative Request – Due to the growing population of Older Blind and the elimination of secondary grants for their rehabilitation services, DSB will request additional general revenue specifically for Older Blind during the upcoming legislative session. The request will require the support of both Mr. Selig and Governor Beebe in order for it to be presented to the legislature. Though this is an austere time, I do anticipate some support for this request.
- Special Language – DSB will be repeating the same special language submitted last legislative session to enable the division to pay tuition for courses leading to a degree. Current state law prohibits such expense without permissive language. DSB is already federally funded to pay the tuition and under corrective action to demonstrate professional development.

Staff News – Cortney Browning is leaving DSB as its Statistician and is going to work for her father, who owns a large construction company. She will manage the company’s equipment rental office. Cortney has been a tremendous asset to DSB and she will be sorely missed.

Sherrie Lamb, wife of Area Supervisor Robert Lamb, passed away recently after a long illness. Sherrie was a highly regarded professional and a passionate supporter of services to persons in need. DSB Staff will be in attendance at the visitation and funeral and we extend our sincere regrets to the family.

Ernest Hart, DSB's newest staff member, was welcomed as the Fiscal Support Specialist in the vending facility program, filling the position held by retiree Patricia Smith.

Relocation of the DSB Jonesboro Office – The Jonesboro DSB office's move was successful, although there remain a few glitches with wiring and keys to filing cabinets.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ARKANAS INFORMATION READING SERVICES REPORT (AIRS) – Mr. Joe Register, chairman of the AIRS Program Evaluation Committee of their advisory board, submitted the following points synopsized here:

- AIRS has a partnership with Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN), in that they are physically housed in the same building on the University of Central Arkansas campus in Conway. The purpose of the co-location is to utilize AETN's engineering services.
- By design AIRS has an Advisory Board, referred to as "Friends of AIRS (FAIRS)" and the purpose of AIRS is to provide local programming and information statewide and to facilitate NEWSLINE. AIRS is now providing information from 20 different daily and weekly Arkansas newspapers.
- NEWSLINE is a significant contribution to AIRS service delivery making information more accessible for Arkansans with visual impairments.
- AIRS broadcast is available all over the state wherever the local cable network elects to carry it. However, satellite users cannot receive it.
- A recent inquiry by the DSB Board centered on how many listeners take advantage of AIRS broadcasting services and how AIRS programming is evaluated. UALR was contacted for consideration of the AIRS evaluation as a class analytical project. However, population-based projects are now referred to the UALR data center as a purchased service. On-air polls asking for responses to let AIRS know that people are listening traditionally get no response.
- Since by federal law, DSB must perform or purchase comprehensive needs assessments periodically, it was suggested that the AIRS board participate in that process when the time comes to measure both utilization of AIRS services and satisfaction. Another recommendation was to have an independent evaluator formulate questions, based on AIRS board input, survey the listeners, do the statistical analysis, and write the report. Feedback that DSB received from RSA in recent years cautioned DSB that reaching out to people already served is not a

- needs assessment, but rather a satisfaction survey. Current plans are to participate in the comprehensive needs assessment and to survey satisfaction separately.
- The Program Evaluation Committee is a standing committee identified in the FAIRS by-laws. Currently members include Joe Register and Sandy Edwards, with DSB Director Katy Morris serving as ex-officio.

WSB OLDER BLIND CONTRACT SERVICES REPORT – Dr. Dickerson introduced two WSB staff members who have been working on the Older Blind Contract Services report. Dr. Janet Ford is the lead person on the project and has collected all the data. She gave the following report to the DSB Board:

From the months of May through August, 2011, 162 individuals were referred and identified as possible clients. Thirty individuals had poverty-related issues (rather than blindness-related) and were moved on to civic clubs, local organizations, and partnering agencies. As far as the OIB client list, in four months WSB completed 76 assessments and 64 plans. There is a variance because, for a variety of reasons, not everyone that is assessed is going to move forward for plan development. WSB has had 60 training modules completed and 79 communities represented. A map shows there is an area that is under represented and not utilizing services. WSB has contacted the Area Agencies on Aging to address this issue. The bulk of the credit goes to the DSB staff. The people who work the River Valley and the mountainous areas of the state do a terrific job. We have literally had no referrals from there. We have partnered with Adult Protective Services and the DHS agencies. We are doing a good job collecting data, and that means that you all are doing a terrific job.

Our clients served ranged in ages from 55-97. We provided assistance to an elderly lady over 90 years old with macular degeneration, who was concerned about getting wood from the front porch to the stove for the winter. We sent some Lions out there; they built a ramp and she now has a new stove. These are the kinds of things that we can report that we do. We have installed a lot of technology and provided instructions on its use. The people who are using the electronic reading technologies are very happy and it has opened up their world. We have coordinated a lot of health care services, some as simple as helping people complete their Links applications in rural areas and shopping for new cell phones. You would be surprised at how the elderly people are embracing technology.

Everything is going well. We have a satisfaction survey out there right now; however, the deadline for submission is not until the end of the grant. Everything that I have seen so far is positive. We were to identify 100 individuals and provide services to 48. We have greatly exceeded that number. We completed 76, and we were charged with 48. The people are geographically everywhere except the River Valley, which includes Ozark,

Clarksville, Fort Smith and Carroll, Newton, Boone and Madison counties. I have talked to the Area Agency on Aging there, and we are working with Adult Protective Services throughout the state. We have a waiting list. Out of the 162, there are a lot of people waiting for us to come and see them. There are 79 different communities on the list. We have had some requests for flat screen TV's as an adaptive approach to providing access, and we have had a couple of other expensive items requested. We think we can use the local Lions Clubs to help respond to that when we don't have funding within the grant program. All the comments have been very positive regarding DSB.

2011 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT – The committee consisted of Ms. Irma Nelson, chairman; Mr. Dickie Walker; and Ms. Sandy Edwards. Ms. Nelson gave the report. The winner of the Clerical Services Award was Ms. Rhonda Garmon. The winner of the Direct Client Services Award was Mr. Tarrie Barnes. The winner of the Administrative Support Services Award was Ms. Christina Shelby. The 2011 Employee of the Year winner overall was Ms. Christina Shelby. The awards will be presented to the employees at the DSB Statewide meeting in Little Rock. A discussion was held on the nomination process, noting that incomplete nominations are still being received by the committee. Chairman Carr said he would appoint a committee prior to the March 2012 board meeting to review and recommend the 2012 nomination criteria and the submission schedule. Katy Morris said DSB will review what was transmitted to the committee this year to avoid missing similar data in the future.

2011 CONVENTION REPORTS – Reports regarding the 2011 National Conventions of ACB and NFB were submitted with the board packets. Ms. Sandy Edwards expressed her appreciation to the board for allowing her to represent the board at the ACB National Convention in Reno, Nevada. Mr. Gary Hall expressed his appreciation to the board for allowing him to represent the board at the NFB National Convention in Orlando, Florida.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT – No representative was present.
No Report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) –
No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet and is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

CONSUMER INPUT – The ACB State convention will be held in Hot Springs in April. The next National Convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, December 9, 2011, at 1:00 p.m. (to include the Consumer of the Year Celebration) at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A & B.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Edwards
Secretary